



Co-operation in Higher Education between  
the United States of America and the European Union to  
produce a robust methodology to evaluate the application of  
the Tuning approach

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## **FINAL REPORT**

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## 1. Introduction

This is the overall final report on the outcomes of the contract (ref: Ares(2010)861659): “Co-operation in Higher education between the United States and the European Union to produce a robust methodology to evaluate the application of the Tuning approach”. The report has been prepared (as the whole study formulation, set up and execution has) in cooperation with the Lumina Foundation for Education.

The concept of formulating a set of evaluation instruments and processes that could be used across the boundaries of national, state, regional higher education systems was born out of the Tuning USA Pilot Project (see below) and the close relationship that naturally had with Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. The need for such instruments had been recognised in Europe and this co-operation proved to be the fruitful bed for this study. This was then mooted at the EU-US Educational Policy Forum in Brussels in 2010. The study was launched in the spring of 2011. A work in progress report was made to the US-EU Education Policy Forum in Washington D.C. in November 2011.

## 2. European Context

Tuning Educational Structures in Europe is a university-driven project which offers a universal approach to implement the Bologna Process at the level of higher educational institutions and subject areas. The Tuning approach consists of a methodology to (re-)design, develop, implement and evaluate study programmes for each of the three Bologna cycles.

It serves as a platform for developing reference points at subject area level. Among these subject areas are: chemistry, physics, mathematics, earth sciences, medicine, nursing, history, social work, music, performing arts, fine arts, architecture, education sciences including teachers training, gender studies and European studies (as samples of interdisciplinary studies), business administration and engineering. This work is based on a wide stakeholder consultation, including employers, graduates, students and academic staff.

The reference points are relevant for making programmes of studies comparable, compatible and transparent. These reference points are expressed in terms of learning outcomes and competences, distinguishing between generic, transversal and subject-specific ones.

Tuning contributes to the development and enhancement of high-quality competitive study programmes by focussing on fitness of purpose (to meet expectations) and fitness for purpose (to meet aims).

The Tuning approach is fully in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (2005) issued by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

and has been instrumental in developing the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (2005) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008).

The Tuning methodology has created interest around the world as well as within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The broader “Tuning family” encompasses projects related directly to, and being guided directly by, what is generally referred to as the Tuning Co-ordination group (University of Deusto and the University of Groningen including the Tuning Academy) and those projects, university adaptations and so forth that have encompassed the Tuning methodology (often in part rather than in total) and have sought to redefine their curriculum using the reference points and approach to learning outcomes and competences on the basis of student-centred learning. The former are easier to map and keep track of, the latter are virtually impossible to map and keep track of in any ordered way. The scale of Tuning adaptations across the EHEA, whilst impossible to quantify or systematically evaluate, is estimated to be large.

### 3. United States Context

The private *Lumina Foundation for Education*<sup>1</sup>, has, as a part of its Big Goal to achieve 60% of Americans with high quality degrees by 2025. The foundation funded a number of analytical tracts of the Bologna Process<sup>2</sup> and projects (Tuning USA<sup>3</sup>) and discussion working documents<sup>3</sup> in the last two years with the help of U.S. and European higher education experts.

The Tuning USA pilot project (2009) involved three states (Minnesota, Indiana and Utah) and six disciplines (biology, chemistry, education, history, physics and graphic design) with a mix of two-year, four-year, public and private institutions. The initial pilot project was completed in August 2010 (the state teams final reports are available from Lumina and have been discussed, studied and thus informed the evaluation work and context), since then a number of other states and organisations have become involved in Tuning USA2. These follow-up projects are a combination of more states (for example Kentucky, Texas, Midwest Higher Education Compact) and disciplines (for example marketing, psychology etc.) plus taking the subject area of history deeper and wider in association with the American Historical Association.

However, whilst the feedback from faculty involved in the pilot and from the three state teams has been positive, more substantiated evidence, apart from the positive feedback and anecdotes, needs to be put forward to enable an analysis of the Tuning approach and the

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.luminafoundation.org](http://www.luminafoundation.org).

<sup>2</sup> Adelman 2009: “The Bologna Process for U.S. Eyes: Re-learning Higher Education in the Age of Convergence”.

<sup>3</sup> Birtwistle and McKiernan: “Making the Implicit Explicit: Demonstrating the Value Added of Higher Education by a Qualifications Framework”, *Journal of College and University Law*, Vol 36, No 2, 2010, NACUA and University of Notre Dame, USA

deliverables from it. Naturally it is anticipated that there will be evidence supporting an identifiable change to the process of learning in higher education. Evaluation is an integral part of the foundation's work with a Director of Organizational Performance & Evaluation (and team) in place and playing a major role in the study along with Lumina's European Consultant.

The danger of categorizing the EHEA as homogenous or the United States as homogenous was avoided because of the strength of experience, knowledge and understanding of the two teams. However, notwithstanding this there were errors in interpretation of terminology and context along the way and great care had to be taken to ensure that a word, term or description of role were understood and thus able to be compared and contrasted. This was the case throughout this study building on lessons learned from those involved in the Tuning USA Pilot Project. The trap of believing that the same word means the same thing was understood, but to ensure complete understanding did require additional time.

#### **4. Process and Methodology**

Two aspects have been to the forefront in the planning of the study in all of its aspects, these are the cultural and contextual diversity of higher education systems and the logistical challenge of distance and time. To this end an exchange of documents took place and a first meeting arranged. This took place in Washington D.C. in November (6/7) 2011. At this the European Team and the US Team exchanged ideas, discussed the Tuning Process and the approaches taken (given the very different histories of Tuning in the two continents and thus the experience of the two teams as well as the diverse context and cultures this was an essential part of the methodology).

The study proposal was based on a two pronged approach, namely:

- (1) To design a robust methodology, based on qualitative and quantitative parameters, to measure the effects of applying the Tuning approach to degree programmes, teaching staff, students and graduates, and
- (2) A focus on a comparison of the processes and outcomes of the development of conceptual frameworks in the subject areas of history and physics, which should result in an alignment of academic standards and reference points. This undertaking should serve as a model for other subject areas.

As the teams' discussions progressed it became evident that the scholars from the two disciplines gave a great input on context, shared reference points, learning outcomes and competences. However, the need for evaluation instruments that would span disciplines (subject areas), roles within higher education (functional job titles and their respective areas of

authority) and also capture the experiences and assessments of those experiences by graduate employees was vital.

### **a. The survey instruments**

Metrics can only be collected once the essential data sets are agreed upon. Then whether or not appropriate questions can be formulated must be determined which make sense in and across the systems and cultures. There is thus a need to look at the questionnaires from a variety of functional perspectives (roles of the respondents with questions fitted to those roles, thus not asking questions that make no sense to the respondent), with language suited to the roles and across the continents. These are longitudinal studies. The life cycle of higher education is not quick, short term or a singular experience – in all systems the time span from recruitment to first cycle studies, movement through those studies and completion is a minimum of 3 years (and in reality longer), add on to that second and third cycle studies (all a part of the educational process) and the time span elongates further.

To be able to capture the views of graduates required the design of a standardised model which allows for collecting data on the careers of peer groups of graduates over a longer period related to the competences obtained and further developed during their academic studies. This too is not a one off “snap shot” audit but an on-going longitudinal study allowing for information to be fed back to programme designers. However, this information is not only of relevance for the degree programmes involved, but also for continuing education (qualifications frameworks) as well as employability related issues (time needed to find employment after graduation, level of employment, career path). The spine for this survey had its origins at the University of Groningen Faculty of Arts from which the current (new) instrument was developed (see Appendix 2).

The two core instruments, the Tuning Impact Survey and the Student Survey (also see Appendix 2) were developed taking in to consideration the complexities outlined (culture, language, role definition, cycles, diversity of institutions etc.). It was essential to achieve instruments that addressed the core issues (change and development), were flexible (able to deal with different respondents) and captured a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation of completion rates remains as an issue to be tackled in the follow up stages to this study, in all systems the formal length of the degree, the average length of study to completion and the reasons for the difference (if there is a difference, which there often is) are complex and bound up in, *inter alia*, funding, degree structures, advice received, credit requirements and frameworks. There will also be a need to participate in and monitor the movement to scale use of the instruments and the collection and subsequent analysis of the data.

The “Venn approach” recognises the need for core instruments (see later) as well as additional methodologies that might be needed in different contexts. To this end it is recognised that further work will need to be done to design qualitative instruments consisting of interviews and (group) meetings of those directly involved in the teaching and learning process and its

outcomes on the basis of a standardised procedure and set(s) of questions: the use of focus groups. This was simply beyond the ability of the groups to develop within the short timescale of this study and all energies had to be put in to the core instruments.

Following on from the joint meeting in Washington D.C. (November 2011) it was agreed that the US Team would develop a “Toolkit” for evaluation, based upon the discussions that had taken place and the attempts to identify what data needed to be captured and in what ways. This would perforce be set in a US context and framework, but would allow for “translation” in to different contexts and settings. Central elements of change were identified that should be captured to determine the developments taking place as a result of Tuning. However, it was also recognised that the existence of, it is thought, so much Tuning additional work taking place that this too had to be outlined in the preamble to the main instruments. This task proved to be considerable in terms of identifying and agreeing the key components, agreeing a common vocabulary (this was in a three way shift: between the US participants, between the European participants and then trans-Atlantic), how to make the task manageable for the institutions and for the required centralised analysis.

The iterative instrument development process was carried out by electronic exchange and followed up by meetings and further electronic exchanges (still continuing).

An interim meeting took place in Groningen between the Study Co-ordinator of the EU team, the Tuning Project Manager and Lumina’s European Consultant (March 2012). At this meeting the crucial need to refine the “Toolkit” down and achieve a core focus was agreed and the next steps to achieve that – namely for the Lumina team to act as the initial agents in achieving the drafts for the two core instruments (Tuning Impact Survey and Student Survey). As the Utah Tuning team had been in the initial Tuning USA Pilot and is involved in this study (history and physics) and were already committed to evaluation it was logical to continue the engagement with them on these evaluation instruments. To that end documents were exchanged (when re-drafted) and a post-exchange meeting between Lumina Foundation and the Utah team (May 2012) took place in Utah. The scale of change from the initial Toolkit to the emerging instruments cannot be over emphasised and was a testament to the collective skills, knowledge, understanding and cross cultural flexibility of those involved. This resulted in revised core documents with the survey also, crucially for the wide scale use of it, being developed in electronic form with skip logic built in to it (see Appendix 1). This will make taking it to scale much more manageable for all concerned and also allow the extended outer-Venn approach and a wider variation of analysis sets.

In late May 2012 a further meeting took place (in Houston at the NAFSA conference) between the EU Co-ordinator and the Lumina core team (Vice-President, Evaluation Director and European Consultant) to work at a fine granular level on the core instruments before the whole EU team re-evaluated and entered into the translation of the instruments in June 2012 (Amsterdam).

In June 2012 the whole EU Team and Lumina's European Consultant met to review the draft instruments (Impact Survey and Student Survey), plus the Graduate Survey and look at the subject specific issues (history and physics) and the evaluation process with student eyes. Regarding the 3 survey instruments each was assessed, the skip logic confirmed and then the whole "translated" in English in to a context that would be broadly understandable to the higher education community across the EHEA, examples being in terms of roles – what is a Provost? In terms of designations, for example – discipline or subject area etc.. The final draft instruments resulting from this process are contained in Appendix 2.

The Impact Survey collects data on the person completing it (role, teaching duties, number of years in post – the skip logic then takes that person to the questions appropriate to that role but they can select a number of roles and thus get all the questions appropriate to their multiple roles), type of institution (degree levels offered etc.), involvement in the Tuning Process, development, use and engagement with learning outcomes and competences, perception of Tuning, interaction with students, change in practices and behaviour post involvement with Tuning, any positive impacts of Tuning (ranked) and any comments on Tuning. The longitudinal nature of the evaluation of what in itself is a longitudinal process – Tuning- must be stressed.

Various members of the teams (both USA and EU) had completed the on-line version of the USA Survey playing various roles. All had found the skip logic worked, made sense and made completing the survey both focused and taking a minimum of time – both of these things are seen as essential in getting a good response rate when the survey is rolled out.

The next steps are:

- a) The completion of the final pilot versions (see Appendix 2 for the agreed and final pilot versions)
- b) A small scale pilot of the surveys both in the USA and Europe with either history or physics groups, to test whether a cold user finds the survey understandable, focused and usable (July 2012).
- c) Adjust the instruments in the light of feedback (August/September 2012)
- d) Re-pilot the instruments on a slightly larger scale in both the USA and Europe (October 2012)
- e) Adjust the instruments in the light of feedback (November/December 2012)
- f) Establish a small Steering Committee to have oversight of the evaluation going forward, reporting back to both Tuning Europe and Tuning USA (on behalf of the Lumina Foundation)
- g) Roll out the surveys (March 2013) – this then to be repeated on an annual basis.

The on-line version will be set up so that "administrators" can access the survey instruments to make necessary adjustments. This will be just two persons to ensure that any alteration is being done with the total agreement of the Steering Committee. Other users will be given access for



data analysis purposes only (by password). The analysis will be able to be done at a variety of levels, for example analysis by:

- Country
- State/province
- University
- Subject/discipline
- Year
- etc.

This granularity of analysis should give researchers and project managers good data upon which to make evidence based decisions.

As the analysis continues it is anticipated that various parties may wish to extend their own data and opinion collection beyond the 3 core surveys. To that extent qualitative instruments may well be developed. These qualitative instruments should inform about behaviour(s) and attitude(s) of key stakeholders regarding redesigning/enhancing of curricula; formulating competence and learning outcomes statements and their practical use; learning opportunities and structures; assessment of students; communication of learning outcomes to students and other stakeholders, etc. This does dovetail with the data /opinion/change collection. The approaches will vary depending upon context but there will remain the core element of data, behaviour and opinion collection and analysis. This will give valid points of comparison and valid reference points. The fact that the methodology is developed and tested in and by two parties, the European Union and the United States, with different cultural, economic and social settings gives global significance to the study outcomes. The core instruments will maintain a focus and specific points of comparison and this will build as time goes on.

## **b. Comparison of Methodology and Outcomes EU-US: the Subjects**

The two subject groups (physics and history) identified as being best positioned for the study, took this opportunity to focus in on their own subject and to analyse the methodology, reference points, outcomes arrived at - similarities and differences. Naturally the groups reported back in a style framed by their subject methodology and the slightly diverse approaches are a good reflection of using the same analytical instruments and frameworks and producing subject specific outcomes. The following summaries are from the two reports but reflect their approaches:

### ***Physics***

Utah included physics as part of its pilot project, the only state to do so. The first part of the physics team's comparison focuses on the main differences and similarities between the way in which the Tuning process reflected the different contexts of the US and Europe. The common aspects are:

- (i) a grass-root level process;

ii) the starting point methodology (which in Europe was developed by/through the process itself and in USA served as an operational inspiration).

iii) Tuning Europe was a transnational dialogue, which gave answers to the challenges presented by a European wide political process, the Bologna Process.

iv) Tuning USA is embedded in a state context, where it focuses on an inter-institutional dialogue whose results can be applied to *curriculum, pedagogy and assessment* at the higher education level.

v) Tuning Europe developed an overarching thorough methodology, which starting from a stakeholders consultation established common reference points for planning/revising degree courses in any of the three Bologna cycles (bachelor, master, doctoral), for assessing students' workload, reviewing learning/teaching methodologies, quality assurance and quality enhancement issues.

vi) Tuning USA mostly focused on Competences and Learning Outcomes (LOs), as common reference points, and carried out the stakeholders' consultation at the end of the process, in parallel to the commitment on LOs.

The second part compares the findings of the two Tuning Physics Groups in terms of:

#### **(a) competences and LOs**

- Tuning Europe developed a set of 22 subject specific competences at bachelor and master level, whose importance was thoroughly investigated through a sample of academics; it also developed a list of specific competences for the doctoral cycle. The relation between competences and LOs, which was embedded only in general statements in Tuning Europe, became much clearer and detailed within the Project CoRe2<sup>4</sup>, which introduced the Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO's) for all three cycles and limited them to 15÷20 per cycle at most.
- Tuning USA developed lists of assessable LOs in much detail, covering in a progressive & cumulative manner the three educational levels. In this context it developed a useful tool, consisting in scale of 11 levels of sophistication (i.e. expectation). Over 10 different examples were given, linking them to 7 specific macro-competences. The Final Utah report describes detailed PLOs for the US bachelor level (42 LOs as a whole).

#### **(b) surveys about generic competences**

- Tuning Europe highlighted the importance of generic competences carrying out appropriate surveys and through internal group debate. Generic competences were the starting point of the whole methodology.
- Tuning USA recognized the importance of surveys, but de-emphasized it in favour of the much more compelling task of finding assessable outcomes for a "course" (i.e. the

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<sup>4</sup> A Tuning Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles, including Programme Competences and Programme Learning Outcomes, editors Jenneke Lokhoff and Bas Wegewijs (Nuffic), Katja Durkin (UK NARIC), Robert Wagenaar, Julia González, Ann Katherine Isaacs, Luigi F. Donà dalle Rose and Mary Gobbi (TUNING), Bilbao, Groningen and The Hague, 2010

degree course). Results from surveys on both sides of the Atlantic were similar, with limited but interesting differences.

As an overall conclusion the group stressed the fact that by being in contact, Europe – USA, they were able to develop a common educational “language” and where there are differences, to know better how to “translate” and interpret them (as an example: in Europe physicists are prepared for a more broad general job market, whereas a physicist in the USA seems to be a “pure” physicist). Lessons have been learned to be able to appreciate the educational approach of one another and there is a shared conviction that both will benefit from future common projects/studies.

The group made a detailed analysis of the approaches taken to, for example, Learning Outcomes, consultation with stakeholders. Examples of these analyses are:

- Learning Outcomes: the degree of development of the structure “Broad Descriptors – Competences – Learning Outcomes (LOs)” shows significant differences in the two approaches. Also terminology differs: Tuning Europe: “Dublin Descriptors – Generic/Subject Specific Competences – Learning Outcomes”; Tuning USA: “Categories – Themes – Learning Outcomes”;
- Consultation with stakeholders: in both Tuning Europe and Tuning USA the consultation regarded the importance (in the respondent opinion) of generic competences and their degree of achievement during the university educational activities. All surveys used (or were based on) the same list of generic (general in the US) competences, carefully prepared by Tuning Europe at the very beginning of the process<sup>5</sup>. The USA version was slightly modified to allow for a more US-friendly terminology.

In the case of Tuning Europe, which originally did not carry out surveys among students, but then did in 2008, the respondents were asked to indicate the importance of the competence for work in their profession.

The gradations of differences and similarities are across the spectrum. However, the dominant message is one of the benefits of this form of trans-Atlantic joint study, investigation and sharing of expertise and experiences.

## **History**

Both Indiana and Utah were in the Tuning USA Pilot project with history as a part of the project. Because of the way the project was set up the two history groups basically worked

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<sup>5</sup> *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe, Final Report Phase One*, edited by Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, 2003, University of Deusto and University of Groningen

independently whilst, of course, sharing the same “library” of resources from the European Tuning projects.

There are notable differences in how the expression ‘Tuning’ has been understood on the two sides of the Atlantic. Some of the reasons for these differences are quite clear, and depend on the different institutional, cultural and political contexts in which the various takes on Tuning have been elaborated. However, in Europe the Tuning History Subject Area Group, as one of the five original pilot groups, was invested with the task of developing Tuning and of elaborating the process itself. There was no existing recipe to be followed. Whereas, in the USA whilst the strength of Tuning was derived from the collaboration of historians teaching in different kinds of institutions, there was the existing body of knowledge developed in Europe. Notwithstanding that Tuning once again needed to be adapted and ‘reinvented’. Context is all and Tuning was adapted to fit the local context, with each state having its own context as much as each European country might.

It is perhaps the case that external pressures can act as a catalyst for academic staff (faculty) to take decisive action themselves: in Europe one might say that the Bologna Process was the catalyst for Tuning. In Indiana interest in Tuning was enhanced by concerns about state-wide programmes for ensuring ‘accountability’.

Tuning USA and its results are, in many ways, perhaps more akin to those experiences where Tuning was undertaken in a single country (in Georgia, in the Kyrgyz Republic and in the Russian Federation), than to Tuning Europe or Tuning Latin America, where regional macro-differences came into play. In Utah and Indiana the sharing and interaction was largely internal, although significant in its effects, and undertaken with knowledge of and reference to Tuning in other countries and regions.

From the reports from Utah and Indiana, it is clear that ‘Tuning’ brought with it a very welcome chance to work in a collaborative context, across levels, institutions and even between subject areas. This aspect of Tuning is commented upon very positively. The participants found that collaboration between staff from the large research universities and the community colleges was very fruitful, with the uncovered levels of similarity much greater than some had thought possible. Also in common with European Tuning is the constant mention of Learning Outcomes, although here some conceptual differences are apparent.

In part, perhaps because of the limited timescale of the Tuning USA projects, it seems that only the first two of the five Tuning ‘lines’ were implemented, those regarding the general and the subject specific competences/learning outcomes. The other themes (student workload based credits as a planning and quality tool, the exploration of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and their alignment with the required competences, and finally the Tuning Quality

Cycle and the creation of tools for embedding 'quality culture' in institutions) whilst discussed were not taken on board. Also, the way in which these other "lines", especially treading in to credits (the credit hour debate in the USA) and notions of quality (decentralisation and the accreditation debate being but two drivers) meant that it was not possible, let alone prudent, to build these in to the projects.

In terms of the general competences, known in Europe as the 'generic competences', the work was organised in quite a similar way to Europe, and in both states the competence lists on which their survey was based were closely related to the European list, although in a different order. As to the Subject specific competences, both the Utah and the Indiana History teams declare that they made reference to the findings of the European Tuning Subject Area Group, but that they felt they were not well adapted to the case at hand, and in different ways the two teams produced their own 'learning outcomes'.

The results from the surveys carried out on general competences share some general aspects with the European results. For example in the USA certain competences which educators believe are important are not considered very relevant by students and employers – this is the case in Europe and Latin America. In some cases this was simply because there were competences which have little to do with the concerns of the historian (workplace safety); in others – team work, project management, a second language – showed differences among the various respondents.

As in other predominately English speaking countries, there proved to be little interest in the importance of being able to access knowledge about other countries in their own languages and conceptual frameworks. One wonders whether in other states, for example California or New Mexico, the result would be the same.

The USA subject specific outcomes are formulated in such a way that it is difficult to compare them with the European results. In the European context, especially in History, because of the great differences in the pathways to reaching the first, second and third cycle outcomes, it was necessary to formulate cycle level descriptors in the form of reference points to the competences to be gained, in the areas of historical knowledge skills and mindset, but without fixing the 'content'.

The most significant difference in approach is that in Europe the conceptual axis around which everything revolved was the idea of 'student-centeredness': a very central aim in Tuning EU was to create tools to help make the epochal shift from the input-based approach of traditional universities to the output-based student centred approach. This theme, continually repeated in the European material, does not seem to be central to the thinking in the Tuning USA report (whilst it is a major element in the higher education debate now taking place in the USA).

There do seem to be two different views of what Learning Outcomes are. In EU Tuning there is a strong distinction made between the competences – what the student knows, understands and is able to do – and the learning outcomes as statements of concrete ways to verify whether the student has achieved them (LOs must be assessable for each and every student). This distinction seems useful, because it allows distinguishing between the purpose of the educational process (creating a context where the student will be able to form these competences) and the means of achieving that purpose – among which there is the definition of the Learning Outcomes for each piece of assessment, learning and teaching (course unit, degree programme etc.)

It would be interesting to explore the implications of making or not making this distinction more thoroughly.

A further important aspect of the Tuning USA project has been the decision of the AHA, the American Historical Association, to ‘tune’. This is a very significant result worldwide, and will have important effects on the awareness of Tuning in many countries. It seems to indicate that at least the general ideas that people ascribe to the ‘Tuning’ term seem attractive and important. In practice, throughout Tuning USA, the term ‘tuning’ or ‘to tune’ is used as if its meaning is clear to everyone. In fact, we have noticed, that very different activities, results and processes seem to be described with this blanket word.

In the case of the AHA, the enthusiasm for ‘tuning’ led to the idea of promoting a pan-USA tuning under the aegis of the professional organisation. The European History ‘tuners’ salute this result as extremely significant and potentially as a model for developments world-wide, even though the methodology is Tuning USA rather than Tuning Europe. It will be interesting to compare and contrast the results and the methodology when the project is completed.

It seems that the Tuning idea, or a particular understanding of what it is or might be, is very attractive for USA historians working in academia. It gives them the opportunity to interact with their colleagues about matters of teaching and learning which they prize. The results are initial and cover only a part of the Tuning process as developed in Europe.

## **The student view**

The European Student Union’s (ESU) representative on the study group contributed across the range of topics. The following is a summary of the report:

The skills and competences that students have at the end of their studies are not described in a consistent fashion across the globe, and it is often programme names, institutional prestige or

other immeasurable elements that determine the possibilities for graduates to launch a career or have their learning experience recognized to its true value.

When Tuning is developed, the approaches do not need to be monolithic. However, it is important to note that one of the main advantages of Tuning needs to be increasing comparability between both studies and study outcomes across the globe. This, in the opinion of ESU, represents an important added value of the entire process to the world-wide educational environment.

The progress in fostering Tuning that has been achieved in the United States is, needless to say, quite impressive. The fact that the development of a tuning methodology started with history is particularly encouraging, as the subject, a humanity, can be subject to a wide range of structural modifications or widely divergent institutional frameworks. However, ESU believes that it is vital that more cooperation be developed in the long-run across borders, so that differences in curricular design stop being a barrier to mobility and comparability.

The development of a significant monitoring tool via a language-adapted survey now offers the possibility to gauge how and to what degree Tuning is happening at institutional levels across both sides of the Atlantic. This effort will include students, which can also offer input on the degree to which they are familiar with the Tuning process, but also to the degree to which they have been involved in developing meaningful learning outcomes for their own studies.

One crucial aspect of developing a Tuning methodology, and the switch to a student-centered approach, that implies the use of learning outcomes is the need to consult both students and graduates. In Europe, great progress has been taken in this field, and student consultation in all education-related reforms is deemed crucial. ESU recommends that this approach is extended to the United States as well.

One other crucial aspect is the work on developing a working assessment methodology that will measure progress in Tuning across the world. This needs to be adapted to local language and customs, but it also needs to have a component directed at students and one to graduates. The initial work undertaken in the past year is a first step in ensuring this comparability of impact assessment. One other positive aspect is the fact that meetings between academic discipline communities have been held within the project, and further steps can be taken in having a functional discipline-level dialogue at global level. This dialogue, like all components of education reform, should include and consult students, graduates and junior researchers, in order to have across the board involvement for all interested parties.

Recommendations and considerations for the future include:

1. The Tuning approach would have a more meaningful impact for students if coordinated at a global level. Local languages, approaches and organizational cultures should be reflected in the development and use of learning outcomes and other forms of educational reform but the importance of global comparability and compatibility should not be ignored.
2. There should be significant consultation at all levels when developing local, state-wide or national-level tuning mechanisms. Students need to be fully accepted as an active stakeholder at all levels.
3. Cooperation between EU and US academic staff (faculty), institutions, stakeholders and policy makers should be continued. It provides an important opportunity towards exchanging good practices, mobility and fostering a trans-Atlantic culture of quality learner-centered education.
4. Tuning Educational Structures, both in Europe and in the wider world should remain a university-driven process, offering a universal approach to implementing reforms aimed at promoting learner-centered education at the level of higher educational institutions and subject areas. As long as the process includes institutional stakeholders, ownership of reforms is likely to facilitate their meaningful implementation.

ESU is committed to working further on education reform, and sees the development of outcomes-based forms of education as crucial in making education across the globe more flexible and suitable to the needs and personal learning styles of each learner. Also, learning can now have a common denominator, and when such learning outcomes are quality assured, ESU believes that more cooperation and mobility can develop across borders and continents.

## 5. Conclusion

This has been an excellent opportunity for representatives of the two academic communities (EU and US) to exchange ideas, build academic trust, investigate the respective varied contexts of higher education, negotiate and navigate their way through terminological and linguistic differences. The study has provided the firm basis for sustainable developments. The groups have emerged, at this point, with a clearer understanding of the frameworks that history and physics operate in and have developed three instruments for the evaluation of the Tuning process. The ground made has been significant and will provide a valuable, robust methodology to collect data, analyse trends and make evidence based decisions.



## **Appendix 1: Skip Logic**

The instrument uses quite a bit of skip logic – meaning a respondent will only see a set of questions that are relevant to how they responded to a previous question. If one attempts the online version you will see that you get different questions depending on your role at the institution. The questions that have skip logic are required questions so you must answer them for the survey to progress.

If you are reviewing the pdf version then this is how the skip logic will work:

Question # 1: If you are faculty, adjunct faculty, tuning team leader or department head you will go directly to question 2, If you are an advisor you will go directly to question 22, and if you are a dean, provost, academic vp, system representative, or “other” you will go to question 27.

Question #4 (faculty, etc.): If you respond “less than one year” you will see questions 5 and 6. If you choose the other two you will go directly to #7.

Question #9 (faculty, etc.) : If you respond “yes” you will go to questions 10 and 11. If you respond “No” you will go directly to question 12.

Question #21 (faculty, etc.): If you respond “yes” you will go to question #36. If you respond “No” you will go to the end of the survey.

Question #24 (advisor section): If you respond “yes” or “somewhat” you go to #25, If “no” you go to #26.

Question #26 (advisor section): If you respond “yes” you will go to question #36. If you respond “No” you will go to the end of the survey.

Question #35 (administration dean, Academic VP): If you respond “yes” you will go to question #36. If you respond “No” you will go to the end of the survey.

## Appendix 2: The Survey Instruments

On-line link: note that your computer may well insert a “cookie” that will prevent your return to the on-line version from the same computer. This “cookie” can be disabled.

EU-US URLs are:

- #1 Core instrument: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EUTuning>  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/USATuningSurvey>
- #2 Student instrument: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/StudentLearningOutcomesEU>  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/studenttuning>
- #3 Graduate instrument: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DemoAlumni2012>

The surveys are available in pdf format -but this is not the format that will be used and does not easily use the skip logic.

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<sup>i</sup> See [www.TuningUSA.org](http://www.TuningUSA.org)